

Religion in American History: A Brief Guide to Reading

The opening sixteen words of the first amendment to the Federal Constitution of 1789--"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"--anticipated religion's centrality to American life in the coming centuries and reflected religion's complicated history in the British colonial era. Scholars have followed the evolving history of religion in America through excellent books based on superb and innovative research. These books graphically detail America's often powerful encounter with religion from the sixteenth through the early twenty-first centuries.

Sydney Ahlstrom's A Religious History of the American People, second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) has towered above all other general histories since its original publication in 1972. Winner of the National Book Award in 1973 and simultaneously magisterial and limpid, Ahlstrom wrote at a time when historians were expanding the story of American religion beyond Puritans and Protestants to include the history of Catholics and Jews in America and even the coming of the "New Age." More modest historical surveys include Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, Religion in American Life: A Short History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, The Religious History of America, revised ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, Religion in America, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan

Publishing Company, 1992), and George M. Marsden, Religion and American Culture (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990). Catherine L. Albanese's America: Religions and Religion (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992) describes America's different religious styles broadly rather than following a traditional chronological narrative.

Several collections of documents use original sources-- letters, diaries, documents--to reveal America's extraordinary engagement with religion across the centuries. Edwin Scott Gaustad and Mark Noll, eds., A Documentary History of Religion in America, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003) samples many different religious traditions in America, and Catherine Albanese, ed., American Spiritualities: A Reader (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) presents the many American traditions of religious contemplation.

The religions of America's native peoples before and after European contact have somewhat surprisingly received less attention from historians than might be expected. Joel W. Martin, The Land Looks After Us: A History of Native American Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) is one of the few general histories of this important topic. Henry Warner Bowden's American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), William G. McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), and Francis P. Prucha, American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian,

1865-1900 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976) describe the often vexed relationship between native groups and Christian missionaries. Ramon A. Gutierrez vividly portrays Spanish-Indian religious interaction on the southwest frontier in When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Ogalala Sioux as told to John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow) (New York: W. Morrow and Company, 1932) offers one of the most famous portrayals of traditional Plains Indian religion and can be supplemented usefully by Michael F. Steltenkamp's biography, Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

Colonial and Revolutionary America

When Americans have thought about religion among America's first European colonists, they often have thought of New England's Puritans, a practice probably guaranteed by Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous 1850 historical novel, The Scarlet Letter. Indeed, historians have written so frequently on the Puritans that Edmund S. Morgan has observed that we now know more about them "than any sane person should want to know." Morgan himself is the author of several superb books on the Puritans, and one of his best, The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop (Boston: Little Brown, 1958), offers an exceptional account of Winthrop's strenuous effort to perfect his imperfect

world. Darrett B. Rutman's Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), T. H. Breen's The Character of the Good Ruler: A Study of Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630-1730 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), and Stephen Foster's The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570-1700 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) describe the Puritans' varied social, political, and cultural achievements and failures. Perry Miller's two volumes on Puritan theology and intellectual life, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (New York: Macmillan Company, 1939), and The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953) indeed make challenging reading, but they still constitute the single greatest achievement of scholarship in any field of American history, not just religion.

Massachusetts's notorious 1692 Salem witch trials can best be approached through Paul Boyer's and Stephen Nissenbaum's account of personal disputing in a Puritan town, Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974). John Putnam Demos, Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Mary Beth Norton, In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002) discuss New England witchcraft accusations and Salem in terms of Puritan psychology and Indian relations respectively, while Larry Dale Gragg, A Quest for Security: The Life of Samuel

Parris, 1653-1720 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), describes the sad life of the Salem minister who leveled the first accusations against Salem's alleged witches.

Three books offer especially compelling accounts of religion in New England in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Christopher Grasso, A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) describe the way religion fared in New England after 1680 using Connecticut as their historians' laboratories. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750 (New York, 1982) explains how religion and women affected each other in New England in the century before the Revolution.

Frederick B. Tolles's Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948) still is the best general account of Quakerism in colonial Pennsylvania. But three newer histories supplement Tolles's account with fresh research: Mary Maples Dunn's William Penn: Politics and Conscience (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) is the best modern book on the founder of Pennsylvania; Jean R. Soderlund's Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) offers a particularly good

account of the Quakers' complex and influential road to anti-slavery; and Jack D. Marietta, The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984) describes how Pennsylvania Quakers shaped their modern humanitarian identity through an internal reformation before the Revolution.

Although the southern colonies were not known for their piety, religion became important there nonetheless. Rhys Isaac's The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) describes an emerging confrontation between Baptists and the Church of England in the 1760s that shaped both Virginia and the American Revolution. The journals of the exceptionally observant Church of England itinerant minister, Charles Woodmason, The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the American Revolution, ed. Richard J. Hooker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), provide a unique glimpse at religion in the southern backcountry, and Christine Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt (New York, 1997) vividly explains south's Protestant evangelical culture that emerged after the Revolution.

The most famous religious events of the colonial period centered on the mid eighteenth-century revivals that later came to be labeled the "Great Awakening." Frank Lambert's Inventing the "Great Awakening" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) summarizes the best of what historians now know about the revivals, and two superb biographies describe the revivals' major progenitors. George Marsden's prize-winning Jonathan Edwards: A

Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), assesses the revivals' most famous theologian, and Harry S. Stout's The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) portrays the revivals' most famous preacher.

Nineteenth-Century America

The development of a distinctive American Protestant theology is superbly recounted in two recent histories: Mark A. Noll, America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and E. Brooks Holifield, Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). The theological force of New England Transcendentalism is still best approached in Perry Miller, The Transcendentalists: An Anthology (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), and the movement's general context is well explained in Anne C. Rose, Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

The often vexed issue of church and state is approached with great insight in Edwin S. Gaustad, Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land: A History of Church and State in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) and John Thomas Noonan's general history, The Lustre of Our Country: The American

Experience of Religious Freedom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

The often difficult, sometimes uplifting relationship between religion and slavery has been the subject of many histories. Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) remains a remarkably vital account of religion in the larger culture of the pre-Civil War south. Eugene Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: 1975) and Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), offer now classic accounts of religion within the slave community. Robert H. Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) describes the complicated relationship between religion and abolitionism.

Religion's role in the Civil War is explored in William A. Clebsch, Christian Interpretations of the Civil War (Philadelphia: 1969); C. C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press,, 1985); James H. Moorhead, American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., A Shield and Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1987); and Steven E. Woodworth, While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

Nineteenth-century America brought forth an astounding array of new religious groups, and historians have been eager to describe the movements that emerged from this American spiritual hothouse. Among the best of these books are Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Richard Lyman Bushman and Claudia Lauper Bushman, Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Bret E. Carroll, Spiritualism in Antebellum America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Gillian Gill, Mary Baker Eddy (Reading: Perseus Books, 1998); Stephen Gottschalk, The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Stephen Nissenbaum, Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980); Ronald L. Numbers, Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-Day Adventist Health Reform, revised ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Robert Peel, Mary Baker Eddy, 3 vols. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966-1977); M. James Penton, Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Jan Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a New

Religious Tradition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Stephen J. Stein, The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

The relationship between religion and American social reform, with its fascinating connections to America's cities, has been probed in histories that often range across both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Four older books have attained the status of classics in this subject: Aaron. I. Abell, The Urban Impact upon American Protestantism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943); C. Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); Henry F. May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America (New York: Harper and Row, 1949); and Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1957). More recent histories describe broader, looser relations between religion and social reform. These include Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge, Mass.,: 1978); Paul A. Carter, The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel: Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956); Susan Curtis, A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); and Ralph Luker, The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Biographies of major nineteenth-century religious figures have long been a staple of historical writing and include Stephen W. Angell, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); David W. Blight, Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Ruth Bordin, Frances Willard: A Biography (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Fawn McKay Brodie, No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945); Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Patrick Carey, An Immigrant Bishop: John England's Adaptation of Irish Catholicism to American Republicanism (Yonkers: American Catholic Historical Society, 1979); Marie Caskey, Chariot of Fire: Religion and the Beecher Family (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Clifford E. Clark, Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman for Middle Class America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); James M. Findlay, Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist, 1837-1899 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996); Robert Bruce Mullin, The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002); and Lance Jonathan Sussman, Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism

(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

Books on women's interchanges with American religion not only have raised the visibility of women's role in American religion but changed the way historians write and think about religion in the United States. Among the best are Ruth Bordin, Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900 (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Ann Braude, Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Catherine A. Brekus, Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Mark Chaves, Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); R. Marie Griffith, God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Kathi Kern, Mrs. Stanton's Bible (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Robert Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

Missions have been a regular feature of both Protestant and Catholic life in America. William T. Hutchison, Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) is a particularly good general history of Protestant missions, and Jane Hunter, The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), probes women's roles in the mission enterprise.

Twentieth Century America

Many nineteenth-century American religious leaders despaired of religion's survival in the next century. They believed religion would never survive urbanization, industrialization, mass bureaucratization, and modern technological and scientific transformation because they thought religion thrived best in a simpler face-to-face agricultural society. These religious leaders would have been amazed, then, to read any of the three published volumes of Martin Marty's projected four volume series, Modern American Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986--), because each vividly conveys not only the survival of organized religion in twentieth-century American public and private life, but religion's prosperity and vitality.

Edward J. Larson's Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion (New York: Basic Books, 1997) revises many myths about the infamous 1925 Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee that challenged the teaching of evolution in Tennessee's public schools. Two books imaginatively trace the origins and progress of conservative

Protestantism in America from the 1880s to the 1950s: George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), and Joel A. Carpenter, Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Grant Wacker imaginatively reconstructs the origins of American Pentecostalism in Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Historians have studied religion's centrality to urban community life with special success, particularly immigrant and minority communities in New York City, where religion prospered despite the city's reputation as the capital of American secularism. Robert A. Orsi's The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) describes the recreation of religious sensibility among Italian immigrants in Harlem, and Mel Piehl's Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), deftly explains the importance of Dorothy Day, New York's most important radical Catholic social and political reformer. Jill Watts, God, Harlem U.S.A.: The Father Divine Story (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), tells the story of African-American sectarianism in New York in the 1920s and 1930s. Deborah Dash Moore, At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), Jenna Weissman Joselit, The Wonders of America:

Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), and Beth S. Wenger, New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) all describe how second and third generation Jews reshaped the religious world of their immigrant parents, and Elizabeth A. McAlister, Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) describes how Haitian immigrants adapted rural religious customs to late twentieth-century Brooklyn. However, Ronald H. Bayor's Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) is a poignant reminder that religious and ethnic conflict remained common in America down to the 1960s.

Biographies reveal the power of individuals in keeping religion vital in twentieth-century America. Among the best are Edith L. Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993); Karen McCarthy Brown, Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Lawrence Cunningham, Thomas Merton and the Monastic Vision (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999); Richard Wightman Fox, Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Maurice S. Friedman, Abraham Joshua Heschel & Elie Wiesel, You Are My Witnesses (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1987); Marshall Frady, Billy Graham, A Parable of American Righteousness (Boston: Little Brown, 1979); Carol V. R. George, God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale and the Power of Positive

Thinking (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Susan Friend Harding's The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Robert M. Miller, Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Robert Moats Miller, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam: Paladin of Liberal Protestantism (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990); and Murray Polner and Jim O'Grady, Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Lives and Times of Daniel and Philip Berrigan (New York: Basic Books, 1997);

Religion played more important roles in post-World War II politics than either contemporaries or historians were willing to acknowledge for some time. However, many recent books now describe religion's complex and often contradictory continuing engagement with politics in modern America. The writings of Martin Luther King illuminate religion's role in the civil rights crusade of the 1950s-1970s, and they are conveniently collected in Martin Luther King, I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper, 1992). Other excellent books include David J. Garrow, Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (New York: Vintage Books, 1986); Charles Marsh, God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Andrew Michael Manis, A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999).

Paul Boyer's When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) describes how beliefs about the imminent end of the world became more, not less, important to American's with conservative political views between the 1940s and the 1990s. Leo P. Ribuffo, The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), and Patrick Allitt, Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993) describe quite different religious views that underwrote different kinds of conservative politics in mid twentieth-century America.

Two books that explore the growth of the so-called "New Christian Right" in American politics since 1970 with special insight are Lisa McGirr's Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), which discusses religion and politics in Orange County, California, and Michael Lienesch's Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), which represents a political scientist's approach to conservatism and religion. Historians and constitutional scholars who have set the growing controversy over religion, politics, and church-state relations in broader contexts include Thomas J. Curry, Farewell to Christendom: The Future of Church and State in America (New York, 2001); Philip Hamburger, Separation of Church and State (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); and John Witte, Religion and

the American Constitutional Experiment: Essential Rights and Liberties (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000).

The continuing enrichment of America's religious diversity after 1980 has already attracted historians' attention. A broad treatment is found in Diana L. Eck, A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" has now become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001). Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, The Muslims of America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), and Jane I. Smith, Islam in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) discuss the dramatic increase of Muslims in America and their relationship to modern American culture. Gurinder Singh Mann, Paul David Numrich, and Raymond B. Williams, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) trace the varied religious experiences of south and southeast Asian immigrants in late twentieth-century America. The essays in Robert A. Orsi, ed., Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) explore the many varieties of religious prosperity in the late twentieth-century American city, again especially among immigrants.

Books about the two of most infamous American religious episodes of the late twentieth century--the November 1978 suicide and murder in Guyana of 900 California followers of Rev. Jim Jones's People's Temple and the April 1993 burning of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas--are almost as controversial as the events themselves, but they can get readers started on understanding the people and events involved. David Chidester's

Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the People's Temple, and Jonestown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), and James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher's Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) elicit insight as well as argument on both events.

Religion's persistence in modern America stems in part from a remarkable engagement with (and some would say surrender to) American popular culture. Colleen McDannell, Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) examines material expression in American religion. Leigh Eric Schmidt, Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and R. Laurence Moore, Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) describe the relationship between commercial culture and religion in the United States. And Paul Elie's The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003) assesses religion in the novels of five twentieth-century American Catholic writers.

"New Age" religion already has received substantial scholarly attention. The best general history from the nineteenth century to the present is Catherine L. Albanese, Nature Religion in America from the Algonkian Indians to the New Age (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Two books by Sarah M. Pike, New Age and Neopagan Religions in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) and Earthly Bodies,

Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) offer reasonably dispassionate guides to these controversial religious beliefs in late twentieth-century America, and they can be supplemented by essays in James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., Perspectives on the New Age (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

New denominational histories overturn this genre's reputation for boredom. Among the best new accounts of American religious denominations are Dee E. Andrews, The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Hasia R. Diner, The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Jay P. Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); James T. Fisher, Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Mark Noll, The Work We Have To Do: A History of Protestants in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jonathan D. Sarna, American Judaism: A New History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Stephen J. Stein, Communities of Dissent: A History of Alternative Religions in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Several university presses have commissioned series that examine American religion and should be consulted for new publications. Among them are the Greenwood Press series,

Denominations in America; two series from Columbia University Press, the Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series and Religion and American Culture; the Oxford University Press series, Religion in America; and Religion in North America from Indiana University Press.